

August 9, 1963

Talking Paper No. 10

CUBA

(1) QUESTION: Why doesn't the United States accept Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba?

ANSWER: The Organization of American States in January 1962 found the Cuban Communist regime "incompatible with the principles and objectives of the inter-American system."

Castro betrayed the Cuban revolution when he placed it, and Cuba itself, at the service of an alien power. He turned Cuba into a bridgehead for Soviet intervention in the Western Hemisphere. The other American states are united in repudiation of the Communist system as incompatible with free institutions. The OAS said in January 1962 that "the subversive methods of Communist governments and their agents constitute one of the most subtle and dangerous forms of intervention in the internal affairs of other nations." Recognizing the threat which communism poses to free nations, the OAS voted to exclude the Communist regime in Cuba from its ranks.

The Castro regime, with the support of Soviet arms, has imposed totalitarian rule upon the Cuban people; has made Cuba subservient to foreign domination; has denied free choice within Cuba and favors the imposition of the same coercive system on all the peoples of the hemisphere. In the face of this, the United States is united with her sister republics in finding the Castro regime an unacceptable neighbor.

(2) QUESTION: The United States says a people have the right to the kind of government they want. How do you know that most Cubans do not want communism under Castro?

ANSWER: Like the people of Cuba, we and the rest of the hemisphere waited in vain for Castro to make good his pledge of "government by popular election." There have been no free elections in Cuba. Castro has said that there will be none.

One party rules Cuba today. Criticism of the government there brings charges of treason, arrest and punishment. Cuban jails hold an estimated 70,000 prisoners who oppose Castro and his regime. More than 200,000 Cubans have left their homes to escape from Castro's rule.

To keep his grip on power, Castro maintains an army of 100,000 troops, a militia of 200,000, a vigilante organization of block wardens numbering some 300,000. It is not the Cuban people's will, freely expressed, but such instruments of control--plus Soviet arms and troops--that keep Castro and his followers in office.

(3) QUESTION: You say that Castro is not the free choice of the Cuban people and that the other American states find his regime unacceptable. Then why do you object when Cuban exiles who oppose that regime conduct raids against it?

ANSWER: The United States recognizes a people's right to revolt against tyranny and misrule, or against a government subservient to alien power and policies. After all, the U.S. itself was born of revolution.

But the U.S. Government is responsible for the use which is made of its territory--its coasts, its territorial waters, its air space. No matter how deep our sympathy with the Cubans who have found refuge with us, the United States cannot abdicate its responsibility for control of activities originating on U.S. soil. An official statement, issued March 30, 1963, made this clear:

"The sympathy of this government and of the American people is with those Cubans who hope to see their country freed from Communist control. We understand that these raids reflect the deep frustration of men who want to go back to their homeland, to a Cuba that is independent. But this understanding does not mean we are prepared to see our own laws violated with impunity, or tolerate activities which might provoke armed reprisals, the brunt of which would be borne by the armed forces of the United States."

(4) QUESTION: Why does the United States oppose the travel of Latin American nationals from their own countries to Cuba?

ANSWER: Between 1,000 and 1,500 persons from other Latin American countries are known to have traveled to Cuba in 1962 for political indoctrination and guerrilla warfare training. The training includes guerrilla tactics, jungle fighting, instruction in the use of maps and weapons, training in terrorism. The trainees are also taught ways of penetrating and exploiting student, labor, and other groups in their own countries.

It is not merely U.S. concern that led to steps to curb the movements of Castro-trained subversive agents. Those steps represent recommendations of the OAS Special Consultative Committee on Security, and the will of the OAS itself.

The Special Consultative Committee on Security of the OAS, in a recent report, outlined three aspects of Cuba-based Communist subversion: (1) the flow of Communist propaganda from Cuba, (2) the flow of funds from Cuba to finance subversive groups and their activities, and (3) the use of Cuba as a base for training in subversion.

This subversive program is a threat to the peace and freedom of the hemisphere. A number of American governments, including the United States, have joined in a concerted effort against such Cuba-based subversion. One objective of this effort is to prevent Castro's regime from recruiting Latin American nationals and training them to overthrow their own governments.

(5) QUESTION: The Soviet Union has removed its offensive weapons from Cuba. You have acknowledged that. Then why do you continue reconnaissance flights over the territory of Cuba, when the threat no longer exists?

ANSWER: Soviet Premier Khrushchev's October 1962 commitment was threefold:

First, to remove from Cuba all weapons systems capable of offensive use;

Second, to halt the further introduction of such weapons into Cuba; and

Third, to permit appropriate United Nations on-the-spot observation and supervision to insure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments.

Important parts of the Soviet commitment have not been carried out. The United Nations has not been permitted to verify whether all offensive weapons were actually removed. No lasting safeguards have been established against the future introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba.

The possibility of the secret reintroduction of such weapons, and the continued presence of Soviet troops in Cuba, constitute a standing threat to the other American states. After the deception which was used against those states in October of 1962, they cannot be expected to trust mere words for their continuing protection. The free nations of the hemisphere look to the United States to pursue its own means of checking on military activities in Cuba.

That is the reason for our continuing observation flights. In the absence of those adequate international arrangements for inspection and verification which were part of the U.S.-Soviet agreement, the camera--as President Kennedy has pointed out--"is our best inspector."

(6) QUESTION: What about the United States' part of the agreement--the pledge to refrain from invading Cuba?

ANSWER: The United States' side of the agreement was contingent upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations to insure the carrying out and continuation of the threefold Soviet commitments. The U.S. agreed, once those adequate arrangements for verification had been established, to remove its quarantine and give its assurances against an invasion of Cuba.

The naval quarantine has in fact been removed. As for the rest, here is how President Kennedy has defined U.S. policy: "If all offensive weapons systems are removed from Cuba and kept out of the hemisphere in the future, under adequate verification and safeguards, and if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean. . . we shall neither initiate nor permit aggression in this hemisphere.

"We will not, of course, abandon the political, economic and other efforts of this hemisphere to halt subversion from Cuba, nor our purpose and hope that the Cuban people should some day be truly free. But these policies are very different from any intent to launch a military invasion of the island."

(7) QUESTION: The United States claims to respect the right of self-determination. Yet you bring many forms of pressure to bear on Castro's regime and you openly state your opposition to that regime. How can you justify that contradiction?

ANSWER: The contradiction is in Castro's lip-service to the principle of self-determination after he denied the Cuban people's right to practice self-determination.

Castro collaborated with the Soviet Union in turning Cuba into an instrument of a system which the other American states recognize as a threat to them. When he did this, Castro betrayed Cuba's sovereignty, and the Cuban people's self-determination, to an alien power.

The failure of the democratic process in any one state is a matter of concern to all neighboring free peoples. Interruption of democratic and constitutional government in one country inevitably encourages anti-democratic elements elsewhere.

The true meaning of self-determination is freedom for a people to decide periodically, and through elections, who their leaders should be and what policies they should follow. Until Castro's regime is ready to seek the sanction of a free election, as he often promised to do in the early days, he has no claim to the protection of the principle of self-determination.

U.S. concern for a change from the present regime in Cuba does not violate that principle. In opposing Castro's regime, we hope for its replacement by a democratic government which will let the Cuban people determine their own fate in freedom from domestic tyranny and foreign intervention.

(8) QUESTION: Isn't it true that the common man in Cuba is better off under Castro than under the dictator who preceded him?

ANSWER: The Cuban revolution promised many improvements. We hoped it would realize its promises. But let's look at the facts:

Under Castro, labor unions have no meaning. They are instruments of the state. The Cuban worker may not strike. To strike would be to oppose Castro's regime, punishable as treason.

Deductions from the Cuban worker's pay used to total five per cent. They now amount to fifteen per cent. He is no longer paid for unused sick leave. He no longer receives the year-end bonuses which are traditional throughout most of Latin America.

The Cuban worker must meet production norms arbitrarily set by the regime, as in the Soviet Union. The regime brings pressure upon him to "volunteer" for extra work, perform guard duty, attend party meetings and rallies.

Castro promised to give Cuban farmers land of their own. Except in a few cases, early in his regime, they did not receive it. Castro first established cooperative farms, under which farmers were supposed to be in partnership with the state. Then, in 1962, he converted the cooperatives to collective farms. Now the Cuban farmer works on the collective farm as--in Castro's words--a "worker in a factory."

Cuba once exported meat and eggs. Under Castro, they are rationed items. Most foodstuffs are now rationed in Cuba. So are shoes and clothing. The Cuban living standard has fallen about twenty-five per cent since Castro came to power.

From six million head of cattle in 1958, Cuban herds are now reduced to four million. Cuba's sugar production, once her prime source of foreign earnings, has shrunk from six million tons a year to less than five million tons in 1962. And Cuba earns far less per ton than before because Castro has committed almost all Cuban sugar to the Soviet bloc for well below the world sugar price, on barter terms and for little cash.

(9) QUESTION: Aren't Cuban economic hardships the result of U.S. economic sanctions?

ANSWER: The Castro regime itself, early in 1960, decided to conduct much of its trade with the Soviet bloc. That decision was not prompted by U.S. trade restrictions or by an unfavorable balance of trade with the U.S.

The U.S. decision to stop buying Cuban sugar came only after Castro's hostile economic policies made increasingly uncertain Cuba's reliability as a major supplier of a basic food product. The U.S., which had been paying premium prices for Cuban sugar, was reluctant to alter what had been a mutually beneficial arrangement with Cuba. With Cuba diverting sugar to the Soviet bloc, we had to diversify our source of sugar in order to assure continuing and stable supplies of that basic commodity for the United States.

Cuba's food problems have been the result of the Castro regime's own failures in agricultural management. Not wishing to inflict hardship upon the Cuban people themselves, the U.S. excepted foodstuffs and medicines from the trade restrictions which Castro's hostile policies and practices made inevitable.

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